

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 ACDA-10 AGRE-00 AID-05

CEA-01 CEQ-01 CG-00 CIAE-00 EPG-02 COME-00

DLOS-09 DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-07 EPA-04 ERDA-07

FMC-02 TRSE-00 H-02 INR-07 INT-05 IO-14 JUSE-00

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 NSF-02 OMB-01 PA-02 PM-04

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 FEA-01 /147 W

-----170412Z 095442 /17

R 161510Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7381

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

UNCLAS REYKJAVIK 0818

USOECD

DEPT ALSO PASS COMMERCE: NOAA/WALLACE AND NMFS/BLONDIN

COPENHAGEN FOR RFA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIS, IC

SUBJECT: ICELAND'S MINISTER OF FISHERIES EMPHASIZES NEED FOR
CONSERVATION

REF: COPENHAGEN 3180

1. APPRECIATE COMMENTS ON ICELANDIC FISHERIES PROVIDED
REFTEL. HOWEVER, EMBASSY WISHES TO NOTE THAT DESPITE
VARIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS NO REPEAT NO QUOTA HAS ACTUALLY
BEEN SET ON COD CATCHES BY ICELANDIC FISHERMEN. AT
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SEAMEN'S DAY CEREMONIES, JUNE 5, MINISTER OF FISHERIES
MATTHIAS BJARNASON, NOTED THAT EACH YEAR REGULATIONS
WERE ISSUED SETTING MINIMUM SIZES OF FISH AND CATCH
QUOTAS. HE POINTED TO THE CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE
MARINE RESEARCH INSTITUTE AND THE ICELANDIC FISHERIES
ASSOCIATION REGARDING CONSERVATION MEASURES AND THAT
FULL CONSIDERATION HAD BEEN GIVEN TO PROPOSALS FROM

FISH BIOLOGISTS EXCEPT AS REGARDS MAXIMUM QUOTA FOR COD.

3. MINISTER THEN CONTINUED: "I DARED NOT SET SUCH MAXIMUM QUOTA DURING 1976 AT THE SAME TIME THAT BRITISH TRAWLERS WERE STEALING THE SMALL FISH, AND I FELT STOPPING THE ICELANDIC FLEET ONLY TO FACILITATE FISHING FOR FOREIGNERS WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION. BUT NOW IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT ALTHOUGH BRITISH TRAWLERS ARE NO LONGER IN ICELANDIC WATERS AND IN SPITE OF VARIOUS MEASURES TO REDUCE THE FISHING OF COD, IT CANNOT BE AVOIDED TO SET, BEFORE LONG, STILL FURTHER RESTRICTIONS ON COD FISHING."

3. MORGUNBLADID, INFLUENTIAL DAILY OF THE INDEPENDENCE PARTY, IN AN EDITORIAL JUNE 13 STRONGLY BACKED FISHERIES MINISTER NOTING: "OUR ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE DEPENDS ON THE SENSIBLE UTILIZATION OF OUR THREE MAIN NATURAL RESOURCES: THE FISH IN THE SEA AROUND THE COUNTRY, OUR WATERFALLS AND GEOTHERMAL ENERGY AND THE SOIL OF THE LAND. OUT OF THESE THREE THE FISH STOCKS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, AND THEREFORE IT IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE HOW WE HANDLE OUR FISHERIES IN THE DAYS TO COME."

4. HOWEVER, BEYOND VARIOUS EFFORTS CARRIED OUT BY MARINE RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO LIMIT COD FISHING, E.G. RESTRICTING FISHING AREAS, SIZE OF FISH, SIZE OF NET MESH, THERE HAS BEEN NOTHING DONE THAT CAN BE CONSIDERED AS "DRASTIC". ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN MUCH TALK BOTH UNCLASSIFIED

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IN THE GOVERNMENT AND IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY ABOUT STRONGER ACTION, E.G. MAXIMUM COD CATCH LIMIT, LIMITING NUMBER OF FISHING SHIPS, OR OTHERWISE ALLOCATING ACCEPTABLE FISH CATCH, THERE HAS BEEN GREAT HESITATION IN ACTUALLY PROMULGATING APPROPRIATE REGULATIONS. SUCH ACTION WOULD HAVE OBVIOUS POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS, GIVEN THE HEAVY DEPENDENCE OF MANY COMMUNITIES ON FISHING. CONSEQUENTLY MARINE RESEARCH INSTITUTE HAS TRIED TO LIMIT ITS ROLE IN CONSERVATION TO POINTING OUT NEED FOR CONSERVATION AND ACCEPTABLE CATCH LEVELS, LEAVING TO THE "POLITICIANS" THE DECISION AS TO HOW SUCH CATCHES WOULD BE DIVIDED. BEARING IN MIND CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CERTAIN FISHING VESSELS AND FISHING (INDUSTRY) VILLAGES (OFTEN A VILLAGE OWNS AN INTEREST BOTH IN A TRAWLER AND A FISH PLANT) AND THE PARTICULAR POLITICAL PERSUASION OF EACH OF THESE VILLAGES, ANY DECISION ON ALLOCATION OF CATCH ARE LIKELY TO BE CRITICIZED AS BEING POLITICALLY INSPIRED AND DISCRIMINATORY. CONSEQUENTLY GOI HAS TRIED TO

STICK TO CONSERVATION SCHEMES WHICH AFFECT ALL
CONCERNED IN ROUGHLY EQUAL MANNER, SUCH AS DESIGNATING
CERTAIN AREAS OFF LIMITS TO ALL FISHING. SINCE IT IS
THEN UP TO EACH SHIP TO DECIDE WHERE IT WILL FISH, GOVERNMENT
CAN DENY HAVING SHOWN ANY FAVORITISM. UNFORTUNATELY,
PRESENT CONSERVATION SYSTEMS ARE APPARENTLY NOT SUFFICIENT,
NOR WERE THEY REALLY EXPECTED TO BE, ACCORDING TO
INFORMED OBSERVERS. AS PROSPECTIVE ELECTIONS DRAW
CLOSER AND STATUS OF KEY FISH STOCKS REMAIN IN DOUBT
GOVERNMENT DECISION FOR STRONGER FISH CONSERVATION EFFORT
BECOMES BOTH MORE URGENT AND MORE DIFFICULT.
BLAKE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, FISHING INDUSTRY, CONSERVATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 16-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977REYKJA00818
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770216-0418
Format: TEL
From: REYKJAVIK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770650/aaaabrno.tel
Line Count: 128
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7dd47c7b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 COPENHAGEN 3180
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2128201
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ICELAND\ S MINISTER OF FISHERIES EMPHASIZES NEED FOR CONSERVATION
TAGS: EFIS, IC
To: STATE USOECD
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7dd47c7b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009